

PSEUDOBOA NIGRA (DUMÉRIL, BIBRON AND DUMÉRIL 1854)
(REPTILIA: SERPENTES): PROPOSED VALIDATION UNDER
THE PLENARY POWERS. Z.N.(S.) 2077

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Bailey (1962 : 167), in a paper dealing with nomenclatural problems of several South American snakes, proposed that the trivial name *Scytale newwiedii* var. *nigrum* Duméril, Bibron & Duméril (1854 : 1002) be revived for the species now known as *Pseudoboa nigra* (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril). Bailey's proposal was accepted by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature and the above-mentioned specific name placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology (Opinion 698, 1964 : 101).

2. Since 1964 the name *Pseudoboa nigra* (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril) has appeared three times in primary zoological literature (Bailey, 1967 : 159; Pessoa, 1967 : 53; Peters & Orejas Miranda, 1970 : 254) and is the only name currently in use for this species.

3. *Scytale newwiedii* var. *nigrum* is a junior primary homonym of *Scytale niger* Daudin (1803 : 342) a name long considered a synonym of the North American Eastern Hognose snake, *Heterodon platirhinos* Latreille (in Sonnini & Latreille 1801 : 32).

4. The name *Scytale* (or *Scytalus*) *niger* Daudin has only twice been used for the black variety of the Eastern Hognose snake (Harlan, 1827 : 367 and 1835 : 130) but the specific name continued to be used, either in the combination *Heterodon niger* (Troost, 1836 : 186; Holbrook, 1842 : 63; Baird & Girard, 1853 : 55; Duméril, Bibron & Duméril, 1854 : 769; Günther, 1858 : 83) or in the combination *Heterodon platirhinos* (or *platyrhinus*) var. *niger* (Jan. 1863 : 44; S. Garman, 1883 : 76; H. Garman, 1892 : 303) until near the end of the nineteenth century when it was finally relegated to the synonymy of *Heterodon platirhinos* (Cope, 1892 : 643; Hay, 1893 : 102; Boulenger, 1894 : 154). Edgren (1957) in a study of melanism in the Eastern Hognose snake found evidence of geographical variation but concluded that subspecies were not recognisable. If at some future date it is decided that a subspecies based on the black variety deserves taxonomic recognition it is unlikely that Daudin's name would be needed as it is antedated by *Coluber cacodaemon* Shaw (1802 : 377). Both names are based on the black variety and the type locality of both has been restricted to "vicinity of Charleston" (Schmidt, 1953 : 179).

5. If the Law of Homonymy were applied the name *Pseudoboa nigra* (Duméril, Bibron & Duméril) would be replaced by its oldest synonym, *Pseudoboa albimaculata* Mello (1926 : 129), a name unused as a senior synonym since its original description. As the former name has already been placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology it is felt that some confusion would arise if it were now rejected.

6. In the interests of nomenclatural stability the Commission is therefore requested:

(1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the specific name *niger* Daudin,

1803, as used in the combination *Scytale niger*, for the purposes of the Law of Priority and the Law of Homonymy;

- (2) to place the specific name suppressed under the plenary powers in (1) above on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology.

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